



BERT LANE

The Rev. James Robertson holds the two chalices that were stolen from his Pembroke church.

'Gift' returned to rightful owner

Chalices stolen in Pembroke left on doorstep of Duxbury church

By Roger Snow
ENTERPRISE CORRESPONDENT

PEMBROKE — A Duxbury priest recently stumbled across two chalices worth \$3,000 apiece and the answer to a question being asked six miles away.

Sometime overnight on Sunday, Oct. 1, someone stuffed two gold, garnet-studded church goblets into a grocery sack and dropped them at the doorstep of St. John the Evangelist Church in Duxbury.

Rev. Michael Marrone, the church pastor, thought they were a gift. What they were was stolen property.

Earlier that afternoon, sometime after a 1 p.m. baptism and before a 5 p.m. Mass, thieves entered St. Thecla's Catholic Church in Pembroke, snuck past the altar and snatched the chalices from an unlocked safe.

But the thieves apparently made a late-night delivery at the first church they found that night — in Duxbury.

"They were just there in a bag. There was no note. It was quite mysterious," Marrone said. "I had no idea where they came from."

Religious accouterments don't have serial numbers and generally aren't marked, so their origin could not be traced. But the inscription revealed the chalices had been donated in memory of someone named Leo Cunningham.

Marrone recalled that a Cunningham had been a pastor at St. John's in the 1940s, so he assumed they belonged at his church and put them away.

"I figured somebody found the chalices up in the attic and was embarrassed they'd forgotten about them for so long," Marrone said, himself slightly embarrassed with his off-target deduction. "I had no idea they were from St. Thecla's."

He realized a week later, when church sexton Charles Critch, the man who found the abandoned grocery bag with the chalices inside, noticed a story in a local paper about the St. Thecla's burglary.

"That's when I started getting curious," Marrone said, laughing a bit. "I was still convinced they were ours, so I called up Father (James) Mahoney and asked him to describe what they looked like. He did and that was the end of the mystery."

Mahoney retrieved the chalices last Wednesday; they were back in time for weekend services.

"We were thrilled they turned up," said Father James Robertson of St. Thecla's. "They had been donated by families in the parish and you hate to lose something people have donated."

Thieves also stole two Oriental throw rugs, worth \$500 each.

"We hope we're able to get those back as well," Robertson said, agreeing they are less likely to turn up.

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Marrone believes the thieves had a change of heart.

"Maybe what they did got to them — they felt guilty," he said.

But Marrone puts more credence in another second theory.

"I was told by a chief of police once that fences won't take religious items unless you can verify you own it. There's a code, an ethic," he said. "The rugs would be easy, but the chalices, you'd have a hard time pawning them off."